

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART.

Sixth Series

CONDUCTED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS.

No. 891.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 22, 1881.

PRICE 1½*d.*

POOR FOLKS AS FUNDHOLDERS.

The powers of the new Savings-bank Act are now in force; and he or she who has ten pounds, may stand in the proud position of a state creditor. Previously, it was difficult to buy less than one hundred pounds of Consols; and there were few proprietors of that amount, because those holding government securities were for the most part rich people. The extreme safety of money placed in the British Funds makes the various securities the most substantial investment in the world. Consols have long been the favourite depository for trustees, from their small liability to variation in value, from the facility of sale, and the ease in collecting the interest. Although three per cent. is a low return for capital in a great trading and commercial community like Britain, yet it satisfies a large number of wealthy people who can afford to take a small interest, and who are saved trouble in collecting it.

The stability of our empire is so unquestioned, that it satisfies the most timorous; for the utmost evil that can befall us is the commercial competition of progressive peoples. The storms of domestic politics never touch the financial basis of our society; and our conflicts with the outer world are limited to the savage and semi-savage races inhabiting the frontiers of our colonies. The throne is safe; the demands for wider liberties are satisfied as they rise; the national wealth is continually diffused among the toilers who show themselves worthy to participate in it; the future, in short, is bright with hope, and forecasts a richer, stronger, wiser England than that of to-day.

No wonder, then, that the British Funds are believed to be the most impregnable of strong-boxes in which to place money. He who has his store there may sleep in peace; no thieves can steal it, nor can moth or rust corrupt it. Another element of safety has also been afforded the bondholder by the endeavours which have been of late years made by successive governments to reduce the amount of our National Debt. The wonderful success which has attended the United States in its

resolution to abolish its enormous state obligations, has taught a lesson to British statesmen and financiers. Moreover, the opinions of thinking citizens respecting the Debt have undergone a profound change. A generation ago, it was supposed that a National Debt gave a solidity to the state, and that it would be dangerous to pay it off. Now, more rational views prevail. Public debt, like private debt, is considered a bad thing, and to be got rid of as soon and as judiciously as possible. Debt is dependence, and as such, dangerous. In the heyday of our great commercial prosperity, we should do all we can to liberate ourselves from the burden which we inherit from ruder and more reckless times. The Debt has to be paid, and while it remains, demands its immense annual interest. Every taxpayer would rejoice if his share of the twenty-eight million eight hundred thousand pounds which has to be raised this year to pay the dividends of the Fundholders, were not to be drawn from his pocket. And who does not wish that future generations may be free from the imposts the Debt necessitates! For our Fundholders must have their interest before the Queen can be fed, before the army and navy can be maintained and equipped, before each of us can have a mouthful or a home; and the Debt must be paid off, if needs be, though all we individually and collectively possess be brought to the hammer under a general warrant of distress. Nor is that all. Should the liquidation not produce enough to pay the national creditors, we should have to toil for them until the uttermost farthing was wiped off; for the honour of Britain could never be tarnished by repudiation.

It is because the honesty of the British government is above suspicion, that its creditors flock from every part of the world, and is the reason that it can borrow money at three per cent. No other government pays so lightly for its loans; and no other national debt stands so steadily in price through the most trying vicissitudes. It is significant of the adamantine integrity of our government, that, when Ireland is a prey to agrarian disorder, when the Afghan war is still

smouldering, when South Africa is harassed by native wars, and when the Eastern Question fills commercial men with dread foreboding, Consols are quoted above *par*! If we compare the prices of other state securities with British at any time, we discover how lofty is the place this country holds in the opinion of the financial world.

The admission of humble investors into the goodly company of British Fundholders is a further proof of the strength of the empire. They are not invited to place their savings in the care of an embarrassed Chancellor of the Exchequer. There is no new loan issued to which they are requested to subscribe under the lure of high interest and a lottery ticket. The country is not suffering from any monetary malady of a wasting kind. It is true that dull trade has long prevailed; that agriculture is under a sombre cloud, and that the future seems menacing to many. But we must examine our standards of comparison, before we can come to right conclusions respecting our present position. Most people compare the exultant trade of 1871-5 with the recoil of 1877-80. But such are contrasts of quite dissimilar periods. It is as rational to compare high tides with low. The true basis of calculation lies between the *last* period of bad times and the present. Were the masses as well off in 1867-70 as they are now? Did Consols stand above *par* ten years ago?

The fact is, people were poorer than they now are by thirty per cent. It is owing to the immense increase in funded and capitalised wealth that Consols and all substantial investments are quoted so high. It is owing to this that poor folks have money to invest in State securities. Had the people been worse off, the new Savings-bank Act would have been an absurdity or, at least, an inutility. The grand determining cause of the Act was the wonderful growth of deposits in the savings-banks themselves. These had increased by twenty-six millions sterling in ten years. It had become imperative to find a new outlet for national thrift; hence the fractioning of one hundred pound Consols into ten-pound divisions. It is true that the funds of the savings-banks were placed in the hands of the Commissioners of the National Debt before; but in a manner that was unscientific, and which caused an annual loss to the Treasury. The state had placed a premium upon thrift; and the growth of it so exceeded the most sanguine expectations, that the savings-banks became a financial embarrassment to the government. The savings-banks were instituted to encourage the working classes in economy, and thus the state became the poor man's banker. The experiment proved that a great national want had been met; and then the Post-office with its marvellously capable machinery was attached. How much this added to the saving tendencies of the people, we know; and what further help it can render will be seen as the new Act proceeds to absorb the economies of the working classes. They are saving now more than fifty thousand pounds per week, bad as the times are; and there is reason to believe, with the improvement of trade, that the savings-banks will receive far greater sums than heretofore. For if there is any

characteristic of the people that has been rising into continually higher prominence, it is the habit of saving. The outcome of the trying years we are passing through will be found in a greater popular well-being than the most exaggerated prosperity could have produced. Poor people are like rich people; they are only taught through their errors, and they find the path of duty after traversing the road of adversity.

Among the great scientific verities brought to light in the present age is the transmission of parental traits to offspring. It is now known that we not only inherit the physical peculiarities of our fathers and mothers, but also their mental strengths and weaknesses. Thoughts and propensities become organised into conduct; and these become our heritage as much as the estates and other worldly belongings of our sires. Now, it is this growth of superior conduct which is beginning to be seen in the behaviour of the working classes. The propensity for saving became marked in the habits of their parents. It is further developed in themselves. It will be still stronger in their children; and finally, thrift will be as striking a characteristic of British people as it is of the French. Our economical neighbours did not attain to their admirable self-restraint by a sudden impulse. It was the sufferings of ages under merciless tyrannies of despotic kings and rapacious farmers-general, that taught their ancestors to utilise all edible things for food, and to conceal their money for supreme contingencies. What was a necessity for the peasant of the eighteenth century, has become a *habit* for the peasant of the nineteenth century. So it will be with the British people. Happily for us, the lessons of thrift, now bearing fruit, have not been enforced in the frightful fashion they were among the French. But the calamities which created the National Debt, during the forty years of revolutionary storms from 1776 to 1816, laid the foundations of the economical tendency which has now become so strong. Besides these, the masses have been won to saving habits by gentler social constraints, by the growth of a strong public opinion, and by the causes which have developed their intellectual and moral powers.

Rightly considered, the advance of temperance and teetotalism is the expression of a higher national understanding. Our fathers drank more than we do, because they did not comprehend the cost to mind, body and estate, which drink entails. A century ago, drunkenness was denounced by the moralists and clergy as loudly as it is now. Dr Johnson became a teetotaler, and used his great influence to stem the tide of debauchery, which threatened society with dissolution. Hogarth, by his pictures of Beer Street and Gin Lane, held up the vice to the execration and horror of mankind. But the intellectual protests were of the feeblest compared with the utterances of to-day. Now, it is Science which says to the tippler: 'Thou shalt not.' And the authoritative command is in a great measure obeyed. Why is this? Surely because the intelligence of the people has risen high enough to comprehend the reasons of the teacher! Science is now diffused through the whole population, and is producing a higher behaviour than obtained in the ignorant past. Morality is advantaged by this, and forbids drunkenness not only as harmful to the sot himself and his family, but as noxious to

the good health and welfare of the body politic. It is not content, as of old, to condemn the drunkard as a sinner, but holds him an enemy to the state. This interaction of science and morality is most remarkable, and is certain to have an increasing influence upon the habits of the people. By it the workman's wages will gradually flow less and less into the publican's till, thus swelling the volume of thrifty investments. As the modes of national recreation improve, and amusements become dissociated from drink and adapted to a superior order of taste, still greater economy of money and time will result.

Among advantages of an indirect kind that must follow from the investment of poor folk's money in the Funds, will be an increase of knowledge among the people of the causes which made the National Debt necessary. Naturally, workmen in talking among themselves about it, will attain clear ideas as to its origin, its astonishing increase during the reign of George III., its decline during the forty years' peace from Waterloo to the Crimean War, and its further diminution to the present day. The history of the Debt is a record of the great facts of British, European, and American history during the period it has existed. It proves by its startling figures that war is as fruitful in money-waste as it is in the destruction of life and the multiplication of human miseries. Working-men who, by dint of hard saving and stern resistance to temptation, are able to invest ten pounds in Consols, cannot fail to be amazed at the almost supernatural sums which have been borrowed by the British government. They will wonder where all the money came from that has flowed through the Treasury. For instance, how could the Britain of a hundred years ago, with its small population, its limited trade and commerce, unaided by steam-factories, railways, and steam-fleets, raise the one hundred and two million pounds that were spent in the fruitless attempt to bind the American colonies to the yoke of the mother-country? Ten pounds is an invisible speck in that ocean of millions, thus all lavished. It bewilders one to think that such a sum could be lent to any government for such an object.

Our unfortunate embroilments with the French people added the incredible sum of three hundred and twenty-seven million pounds to the National Debt from 1793 to 1801. And more than forty million pounds were added during the two years' *peace* which followed the triumph of the French revolutionists. All that immense treasure, the fruits of British industry and economy, was wasted in foreign wars, in which we had little concern. When in 1815, the temple of War was closed, the people of Britain found that the Debt amounted to eight hundred and sixty million pounds. Yet this did not represent the whole that had been spent; for the funded and unfunded Debt was nine hundred and forty-three million one hundred and ninety-five thousand nine hundred and fifty-one pounds on the 1st February 1813. Sinking-funds, a redeemed land-tax and life-annuities had wiped off two hundred and thirty-six million eight hundred and one thousand seven hundred and forty-two pounds. The French wars cost us something like eight hundred millions of money. The small fundholder may ask what was the condition of the country after such a

deadly drain of its material resources. He will find that it was a land of bankrupts and beggars, where despair was the grim guest in every household except in those where the profits of war had been flowing ever more hugely. Makers of weapons had thriven, so had army contractors of all sorts; all else had sunk into a state of poverty of which we have not any idea.

But Britons did not long permit despondency to reign over them. When they had taken breath and counsel with each other, they set to work to rebuild the shattered national fortunes, and to find the means to pay the interest upon their gigantic owing. Despair gave new energies to all; and in the desperation of his circumstances, the citizen found new courage and power to determine a better fate. How low the credit of the country was is seen in the price of Consols. They were down to fifty-three and seven-eighths in 1816. The public Debt amounted to forty-three pounds per head of the population; its interest imposed an annual tax upon each individual of thirty-two shillings. At the present moment the Debt is not much more than twenty pounds per head, and the interest is about sixteen shillings per head. And the contrast between the two states, after allowing for the increase of population, is wholly the work of *peace*.

It was in the heroic determination to do their duty amid the wreck of trade and in the trance of commerce, that the seeds of the ten pounds now going into the shape of Consols germinated. The necessity of persistent economy was realised. The inventive genius of the nation grew with its difficulties; and a thousand new processes in manufactures and arts came into being. The spirit of the nineteenth century awoke, and has transformed us from an ignorant people into the most civilised in the world. Improvements began in every sphere of activity. The popular voice demanded a hearing in the counsels of the nation; and then came the Reform Bill. Since then, no political party could pursue the bellicose career of those who spent the incredible millions we have referred to. While continental states are arming their male population with every appliance for slaughter, and taxing them in money and liberty, until societies are almost reduced to a primitive barbarism, Britain is free from conscription, from militaryism, and from the subjections they impose. There is nothing fortuitous in this. It is the outcome of the lessons which war has taught our race. It is the reaction against the system which made the peasant food for powder, and the National Debt the most monstrous burden ever placed on the backs of a free and intelligent people. The barrier of the sea truly gives us an immunity from some of the dangers which beset continental governments; but our surest safeguard lies in the popular conviction that war is bad for the commonwealth and must only be resorted to in extreme perils. The old combative spirit which animated our fathers has neither decayed nor died out. We refuse to give unnecessary tribute to the sword; but where anything worthy is to be gained by fighting, our people are still in the van. The courage, however, that once ran to carnage, is now spent in exploring the unknown regions of the earth, and in adding fresh realms to the empire of industry. From this comes the wealth that makes poor toilers creditors

of the state, and which sends plenty through the land.

Clearly, the toiling world has entered upon a new and marvellous career, whose end is beyond the ken of the most far-seeing.

THE FORTUNES OF BERTRAM OAKLEY.

CHAPTER VI.—TAKING LEAVE.

WONDERFUL indeed, for a bright-witted, pure-hearted boy, at the very outset of manly life, was that change that had dawned so suddenly upon the fortunes of Bertram Oakley, since his transference from his dreary attic, from his quiet ward in St John's Hospital, to the shelter of the doctor's roof. Bertram was hardly less bewildered, at the first, than was his prototype of the *Arabian Nights*, that Bedreddin Hassan whose adventures children follow with such breathless interest, the young Prince magically snatched away from pomp and palace-life to lie at the gate of a strange city and become apprentice to a pitying pastrycook. True, Bertram's experience was in an inverse ratio to that of his Oriental predecessor; but then so complex is our social system as compared with that of the fatalist and unchanging Moslem, that he had probably more reason for reflection than had the turbaned young Emir whose mainstay in life was the priceless recipe for making cream tarts without pepper.

To say that Bertram had never entered a gentleman's house before the day on which he became an inmate of Dr Denham's, would be untrue. The threshold of his rich employer, Mr Burbridge, he had indeed never crossed. Masters and men in a manufacturing town have a great gulf between them, not to be socially bridged. But at Bowcastle, the Somersetshire fishing village in which the shipwrecked boy had spent his earlier years, Mr Marsh the meek curate, and the gruff Lieutenant at the coastguard station, had often invited the young waif within their humble doors, had lent him books, and taught him trifling accomplishments, or facts not to be picked up among the rough, well-meaning fishers who were his chief patrons; so that the stripling had acquired a refinement of manner unusual indeed among mill-workers.

But, at Dr Denham's house, all was on a scale modest indeed, but greatly surpassing anything on which Bertram's eyes had as yet rested. There were the signs of competence, and of the taste that does not always go with easy means, in the handsome rooms, with their mirrors and pictures and curtains—in the well-chosen furniture, the flowers and ferns, the freshness, brightness, and harmony of a well-arranged home. Home! to Bertram Oakley, the foundling of a sea-beach, the stranger-child reared among rude playfellows by some fisherman's smoky hearth, the clever young mill-hand, and the late tenant of a desolate attic, had hitherto been as a vain word. Now he began to understand what it meant, and that order and family affection and education, and respect for the best and brightest side of human existence, are the very props and stays of home. To him,

weakened by his recent illness, it was a positive luxury to be able to feast his eyes on well-assorted colours, to gaze long upon the varied greens of the fernery, or to watch the light falling upon the semi-transparent leaves and rich-tinted flowers that filled the windows.

That the young guest was well received in the doctor's house was, with a family so united in heart, the merest matter of course. He had entered it, certainly, in an anomalous position. A toiler but yesterday for daily bread, to be earned amidst the jar and clangour of the whirring machinery of a woollen mill, it would have been difficult for the most nicely accurate Master of the Ceremonies to define his proper station in such a household. He had a pretty room assigned to him, with well-stored book-shelves in it, and from the windows of which he could catch a distant glimpse of the grand trees and lofty pile of that St John's Hospital that he had lately left. But by the kindness of Miss Denham and her sister, the young mistresses of the house, who vied with one another in generous feminine attentions towards the convalescent, Bertram was seldom alone. They made him welcome in the drawing-room, and tended him almost as though he had been a sick brother of their own.

'You will spoil that boy among you,' Dr Denham would sometimes say, laughingly, when Bertram was absent.

'I don't think it would be easy to do that, papa,' answered Louisa Denham, looking up from her work.

And indeed the lad's intrinsically noble nature seemed proof against being injured by prosperity, as it had resisted all the ills of poverty and solitude and bad company. He appeared to be one whom no indulgence could tempt to presume or to encroach. His manners, by some fine instinct of mingled frankness and delicacy, were such as even to satisfy so severe a critic as Uncle Walter, whose private opinion of the wisdom of the doctor's patronage of his young friend had not exactly coincided with his smiling acquiescence in the project.

Nobody and nothing among his new surroundings, novel as they were, presented such a standing puzzle to Bertram Oakley as Uncle Walter himself. The characters of the rest of the family group were patent and notable. There was a certain husk of quaint originality incrusting that of Dr Denham, but the kernel of the nut was unquestionably of solid gold. Then there was Louisa Denham, with her plain, honest face, and sound mind and tender heart; one of those women who seem to give so much and to exact so little from the great sum of human happiness. And there was Rose, the sweet rosebud of a girl, not developed as yet, but of a glorious promise. But Uncle Walter—well, well! A more experienced student of mankind might have surveyed Uncle Walter as a flesh-and-blood hieroglyph hard to decipher.

Mr Walter Denham, the first surprise once over, was urbane, and even friendly, in his demeanour towards his elder brother's youthful guest. So much was this the case, that Bertram sometimes inwardly blamed himself for not being more drawn towards so affable and courteous a gentleman, himself a mine of anecdote and ready information. Uncle Walter really was kind, after

his fashion, to Bertram, telling him stories of strange lands and odd customs, more interesting from the lips of an eye-witness than in the pages of a printed book; showing him sketches of foreign costumes, of bits of Saracenic or Greek architecture pencilled down in rarely explored nooks—here, a horseshoe arch, gorgeous with golden honeycomb, from a Moorish ruin in some Sicilian town, haunted by brigands and malaria; there, a single snow-white column of Paros marble, mournful but erect, in the midst of a wilderness of tall weeds and broken blocks and shattered fragments of carved stone.

Then it was Uncle Walter's caprice to sketch Bertram himself, in chalks, in crayons, and so forth, and to add his portrait to the many contained in his clasped scrap-book, to a page in which he had already transferred his niece Rose's golden head and innocent blooming face. 'A compliment, I assure you,' said the *virtuoso*, in his cool, bland way, as he plied his dexterous pencil; 'and a compliment, too, which I never before paid to a British face—a masculine one, that is, for our damsels often deserve it—except one sailor whom I met at Genoa, destitute indeed, but grandly picturesque.—A little more to the left.—Thank you. Now I catch the expression. When first I saw you, Master Bertram, I thought it was a pity you were not in rags and sitting on a sunny beach—pray, don't move—beside an old boat, trying to get a little music out of a broken guitar, like many a Neapolitan lad I have seen—or perhaps playing *morra* for *carlini* in the shade. But when you open those dark eyes of yours, there is a look of the lion in them, somehow, that would not suit with the picture.'

There were at this time frequent visitors, who came to express their regrets for the loss that the town was about to undergo in being deprived of its popular physician; and among these were the families of some of the mightiest magnates of Blackston. Nothing varies more capriciously than the social position of doctor. That of Dr Denham, in the manufacturing town in which he had dwelt for years, was sufficiently good. He was respected not merely for his professional merits and his long connection with the famous old Hospital, which was the one local institution that deserved to be called romantic, but because of rumours of his learning and research, oozing out through the medium of scientific periodicals, and which had slowly made their way round to practical money-making Blackston. Among those who called was Bertram's former master, Mr Burbridge, whose name ranked second to none, wherever wool or woollen goods were bought and sold, in that West-country district. The mill-owner brought his heavy eyebrows to bear, like ponderous artillery, first on Louisa, then on Rose, and next on Uncle Walter, whom he eyed as though he had been a creature of some rare and newly discovered genus. 'Ah, well, young ladies,' he said, in his blunt way, 'I am told I ought to congratulate your papa—though we shall miss him here and at St John's—and I hope, for the doctor's sake and yours, I am sure, that it is so. And the doctor is too wise not to have thought of the proverb about a rolling stone, eh? Sorry not to have seen him—busy, as usual, and so am I—Ah! here is my lad!' he added, as Bertram came half shyly in, just in time to receive a hard hand-shake from his old

employer as he departed, and to feel that a crumpled bit of paper, which turned out to be a bank-note, had been left in his palm. That note was destined to be of service earlier than giver or recipient thought.

CURIOS ANTIPATHIES.

We often meet with persons who profess a loathing or dislike of some particular object, which forms an idiosyncrasy in their nature that we cannot account for; but it oftener turns out either that the supposed involuntary antipathy can be overcome by effort of will, or that it is a foolish affection. In this paper we purpose, however, to give an account of some remarkable cases which are well authenticated. There are some relations of the Baron Munchausen kind, but it is easy to distinguish between these and *bond fide* cases. We do not, for instance, believe with the whimsical Mersenne, that the sound of a drum made of wolf's skin will break another of sheep's skin; or that hens will fly any faster at the sound of a harp of fox-gut string, than one struck with any other. We shall only deal with cases which, to the best of our belief, have attracted the attention of the curious, and puzzled the penetration of the psychologist.

It is well known that the vanity of King James I. never overcame his weakness of being unable to look on a naked sword. Sir Kenelm Digby was proud to relate that when he was knighted at Hinchingbrooke, near Huntingdon, the king turned his face away, and nearly wounded him. This may be accounted for, as his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, shortly before his birth, had a great shock given to her on seeing her favourite, David Rizzio, killed in her presence. We are told of Uladislaus, king of Poland, that he could not bear to see apples. Pennant, the eminent traveller, had a great aversion to wigs, which was also transferred to their wearers for the time. Once, in the presence of the Mayor of Chester, who wore a powdered wig, he got very excited and nervous, and angrily made some strong remarks about the Mayor to a companion. At last losing all control over his feelings, he rushed at the Mayor, pulled off his wig, and ran with it out of the house and down the street, waving it aloft as he went. The Mayor followed, to the amusement of the populace; and this curious race was afterwards known as the 'Mayor and Mr Pennant's Tour through Chester.'

It is said of the Duke of Schomberg, that, soldier as he was, he could not sit in the same room with a cat; and we have heard of a person with so great a dislike to this harmless domestic animal, that he would not even pass under a sign-board with a cat painted on it! It will hardly be credited that though the valorous Peter the Great built a fleet, he yet from his sixth to his fourteenth year could not bear the sight of either still or running water, especially if he was alone. He did not walk in the palace gardens because they were watered by the river Mosera; and he would not cross over the smallest brook, not even on a bridge, unless the windows of his carriage were shut close, and even then he had cold perspirations. La Mothe de Vayer could not endure any musical instrument, although he

delighted in thunder. Grebry the composer and Anne of Austria were identical in their dislike of the smell of roses.

The learned Dr Beattie tells us of healthy strong men who were always uneasy on touching velvet, or on seeing another person handle a cork; Zimmerman the naturalist, of a lady who could not bear to touch silk or satin, and shuddered when feeling the velvety skin of a peach. One of the Earls of Barrymore considered the pansy an abomination; and the unfortunate Princess Lamballe looked upon the violet as a thing of horror. Scaliger turned pale at the sight of water-cresses, and neither he nor Peter Abono could ever drink milk. It is said of Cardan that he was disgusted at the sight of eggs. We have heard of valiant soldier fleeing without shame from a sprig of rue. The author of the *Turkish Spy* tells us that provided he had but a sword in his hand, he would rather encounter a lion in the deserts of Arabia, than feel a spider crawling on him in the dark! William Matthews, son of the governor of Barbadoes, had, like the above, a great aversion to the harmless spider. One day the Duke of Athole, thinking his antipathy somewhat affected, left him and his friends in the room, and came back with a closed hand. Matthews thought he had a spider concealed there, and becoming furious, drew his sword, and would have done damage to the Duke or himself, had not his friends interposed.

We hear from the philosophic Boyle, that the sharpening of a knife or the tearing of brown paper never failed to make the gums bleed of a servant he once had. Chesne, Secretary to Francis I., always bled at the nose on seeing apples; a gentleman also in the court of the Emperor Ferdinand had the same indisposition on hearing a cat mew. In the *Universal Magazine* for October 1762, we read of a woman who on handling iron of any kind was immediately bathed in perspiration, though never otherwise affected in this way. M. Fehr relates in *The Academy of the Curious*, an account of a young woman at Schelestat, Germany, who for sixteen years had such an aversion to wine, that she could not touch anything of its nature without perspiring profusely, though she had previously been accustomed to drink it. John Pechmann, a learned divine, never heard the floor swept without being immediately uneasy, and feeling as though he were suffocated. He would run away or jump out of a window at the sight of a brush, the association with it and the noise was so intolerable. In King's *Ten Thousand Wonderful Things*, we read of a young man who was known to faint whenever he heard the servant sweeping. Mr E. Wrigglesworth, in *The Lamp*—a Roman Catholic magazine—tells us of a monk being served with a dish of crayfish, at which he changed colour, grew pale, stared prodigiously, while the perspiration poured down his face, and he appeared in so languid a state that he seemed inclined to fall from his seat. He afterwards declared that he had no idea of anything that had happened; but at the same time related that as he was one day preaching, he observed a boy at the church-door with a crayfish in his hand; on which he instantly felt the strongest emotion, and that he should have become speechless, if he had not quickly turned his eyes from the object. M. de Lancré gives an account of a brave officer so frightened at the sight of a mouse, that he dare

not look at one without a sword in his hand. We read of another case of an officer who was only troubled with fear in the presence of a smothered rabbit. Another man was subdued by a cold shoulder of mutton!

Burton, the traveller, tells us that a melancholy Duke of Muscovy fell ill if he but looked upon a woman, and that another anchorite was seized with a cold palsy under similar circumstances. Here is a case of a lady having an aversion to the opposite sex; it appeared in the obituary of a newspaper some fifty years ago: 'Lately, at Gray's Almshouses, Taunton, aged eighty-two, Hannah Murton, a maiden lady. She vowed several years ago that no he-fellow should ever touch her living or dead. In pursuance of this resolution, about ten years since she purchased a coffin, in which whenever she felt serious illness, she immediately deposited herself, thus securing the gratification of her peculiar sensibility.' There are many cases similar to this lady's on record, though they are manifested in a more imperfect way. In Hone's *Table Book*, we find an account of a gentleman in Alcantra, named John Roll, who would swoon on hearing the word *lana*, wool, although his cloak was made of the same material. Again, in the *Universal Magazine*, we read of a young woman of Namur who fainted whenever she heard a bell ring. The medical pioneer, Hippocrates, mentions one Nicanor who swooned whenever he heard a flute. Amatus Lusitanus relates the case of a monk who fainted when he beheld a rose, and never quitted his cell when that flower was in bloom. Scaliger mentions one of his relations who experienced a similar horror on seeing a lily. Henry III. of France fainted whenever he saw a cat. The Duke d'Épernon swooned on beholding a leveret, though a hare had no effect upon him. Tycho Brahe, the superstitious astronomer, was similarly affected on seeing a fox, and Marshal d'Albert at the sight of a pig. We hear of a French lady who swooned on seeing boiled lobsters; while Ambrose Paré, a celebrated French surgeon, mentions a gentleman afflicted with the same weakness when he saw an eel. M. Vaughim, a great huntsman in Hanover, felt dizzy and fainted, or, if he had time, he would run away, when he saw a roasted pig.

The credulous Dr Mather records an account of a young lady who fainted if any person cut his nails with a knife in her presence; but if done with scissors, she was indifferent. Boyle, the philosopher, himself tells us that he never conquered his uneasiness at the sound of water running and splashing through a pipe, and that he sometimes even fainted. We are told of French people particularly partial to the odour of jonquils or tube-roses, who will swoon at the smell of ordinary roses. Orfila, the distinguished French physician, furnishes an account of the painter Vincent, who was seized with violent vertigo and swooned when there were roses in the room.

Very extraordinary is a case that the eccentric Jean Jacques Rousseau tells us, of a Parisian lady who was seized with an involuntary and violent fit of laughter whenever she heard any kind of music. John Keller, an ancient rector of Wielk, a small village of Silesia, was alarmingly afflicted in the same manner when he saw a pasty of smoked hog served up, which is a favourite dish in that country. M. de Lancré, again, gives us

a marvellous account of a man so terrified at seeing a hedgehog, that for two years he imagined his bowels were gnawed by one. It is said of Lord Lauderdale that he preferred the mewing of a cat to the sweetest music, while to the lute and bagpipes he had a great aversion.

Boyle, who seems to have paid some attention to antipathy, records the case of a man who felt a natural repugnance to honey. Without his knowledge, some honey was introduced in a plaster applied to his foot, and the accidents that resulted compelled his attendants to withdraw it. He has a similar case of a lady with the same aversion; her physician mixed some with a plaster without her cognisance; which caused the most dangerous effects until the plaster was removed.

The foregoing are mostly cases of eminent persons; and to what extent these strange affections exist unrecorded in social life, we shall never know. An old poet says:

Nature and the common laws of sense,
Forbid to reconcile antipathies.

We now, however, close our extraordinary list, knowing no other reason for many of the instances, than did Shakspeare when he makes Shylock say in *The Merchant of Venice*:

Some men there are love not a gaping pig,
Some that are mad if they behold a cat;
And, others, when the bagpipe sings i' the nose,
Cannot contain themselves; for affection,
Mistress of passion, sways it to the mood
Of what it likes or loathes.
As there's no reason to be rendered
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig;
Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
Why he, a swollen bagpipe;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged hate, a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him.

A STRANGE RETRIBUTION.

CHAPTER V.—TOO LATE.

Two or three years now passed by, during which I heard nothing of the Stockdales. It was, I well remember, the last day of the year 1842. I had just returned to Liverpool with the *Miranda* from Trinidad, had left the vessel in dock, and had made my way as usual to the *Neptune Hotel*. On asking for letters, the waiter—a new one; the old waiter had left, I found, some four or five months before—placed a bundle of them in my hand. But in looking over the addresses, I saw at once that there was none from Rathminster. I thrust them into my pocket; I would read them at my leisure. The letter which I had been so long expecting, which I dreaded to receive, was not there. ‘It has not come yet,’ I said to myself with a feeling of relief. After dinner, I retired, as was customary with me, to my room. I had some writing to do. When that was finished, I drew my chair to the fireside and took up a book, which I soon, however, laid aside, finding that I was reading the sentences mechanically without taking in the meaning, my mind being occupied with other things. So I sat thinking—thinking of the old times, of my disappointment, of Fairy, of my last meeting with her. I had no reason for expecting a letter from

her. After what her husband had said, it was improbable that she would ask me to go to see her—improbable even that she would write to me. ‘How, then,’ I asked myself, ‘am I to learn anything of her at all, unless I go to Rathminster?’ I felt uncertain what to do. On the one hand, there was the harm a visit might do; but on the other, there was my promise to Mrs Pearson. There might be nothing amiss; and yet I felt uneasy in my mind; and I have since remembered that, as I sat by the fireside on that night—the last night of the year—I actually wished that I possessed the power one reads of in fairy tales, of seeing what was happening in some far-off place. At length, as my eyes rested upon the oak cabinet opposite, I recollect the order I had given to the former waiter about my letters. ‘I may as well,’ I thought, ‘just look into that drawer.’ I walked over to the cabinet, and pulled the drawer open; and there it was, the very letter I was dreading to receive, lying where it had been for months! I knew Fairy’s handwriting in a moment. I opened the letter and read it. It was very short.

MY DEAR TOM—Perhaps I shall not see you again; and so I wish just to tell you how grateful I am to you for all your kindness to me ever since we were children together. You were very good to me that last day I saw you, and I know that you will remember what I said to you about the grave.—Good-bye. Ever, as of old, your affectionate FAIRY.

My anxiety about Fairy was increased a hundredfold by this letter. She did not say she was in trouble. But why did she tell me nothing of herself? Why did she speak of not seeing me again? Why did she remind me of the promise about her grave? Why did she write at all? There was something wrong. She was ill perhaps, it might be dangerously; and the letter was five months old. Perhaps already it was too late. At any rate I could not endure the suspense. My mind was made up. I would go to Rathminster as soon as it should be in my power to do so.

It was the morning of the fourth of January, before I was able to leave Liverpool; and on the afternoon of the fifth I reached Rathminster. On driving into the town, I noticed that many of the shop windows were closed—a token that some one was dead; and seeing an acquaintance as I stepped off the car, I asked him who it was.

‘Have you not heard?’ he exclaimed. ‘That is very strange. I thought it was on account of it that you were here.’

Then a great fear came upon me. ‘Who is it?’ I demanded.

He did not tell me, but I knew, for he said: ‘You had better come with me, I think. Dr Burton is at home, and he was there, and can tell you.’

I went with him to the doctor’s house—a kind old man, though never a very able practitioner, and for many years inefficient through age. He told me all. It was more dreadful than I had even imagined. Fairy was dead. There had been an inquest, at which Dr Burton was examined. She had been found on the morning of New-year’s Day lying dead in the little wood, under one of the silver firs at the side of Stockdale’s cottage. There was no doubt what had happened, for one

of her husband's razors was found in her hand. The jury, being resident in the locality, and knowing all the circumstances, did not think it necessary, said Dr Burton, to go into any minute or painful investigation. It was clearly a case of temporary insanity.

'You know,' he said, 'her manner was very strange of late—great and unreasonable depression of spirits, and desire to be alone. I saw her a week before, and found her in an extremely nervous condition, and thought it right to warn her husband that she should not be left by herself. It was while he was asleep, she did it.' The funeral, the doctor told me, was to be the next day.

I left Dr Burton's house, and chose the way that would bring me soonest out of the town, for I was in haste to be alone. Then, as I got into the country, the desire became irresistible to walk along the path where last I had walked with her—to stand upon the spot where last I had stood with her—to feel again, in thought at least, the parting pressure of the hand that I should never clasp again—to see, in memory at least, the dark-gray eyes, now closed for ever; and so I took the pathway through the churchyard. Then, as I was passing through it, I remembered Fairy's request, the last she ever made of me, and I turned aside to see the spot where she was to rest. I found Mrs Pearson's grave. I had almost dreaded to see a fresh opening in the turf; but there was none; the green sod had not been disturbed. Could the intention be to bury her in some other part of the churchyard? I determined to inquire. On finding the sexton, he told me that she was to be buried, he understood, in the old churchyard of Gortfern; 'which,' he said, 'is much wondered at, as it's four long miles away; and both the Stockdales and the Pearsons have been buried here for generations.'

On hearing this, I felt that I must at once speak to Stockdale on the subject, however painful it might be to me. My promise to my cousin left me no alternative; so I left the churchyard, and walked quickly along the path through the fields, till I came out upon the high-road opposite Stockdale's house. I crossed the garden, and knocked. Presently, a woman came, an old servant of the Stockdales, called Dorothy Brien. She did not seem to know me, and asked me what I wanted. I said I wished to see Mr Stockdale. She inquired if my business could not be put off, as there was a death in the house; and on my replying in the negative, she left me. I had not long to wait before Stockdale appeared. When he saw me, he turned deadly pale, took a step backwards, and seemed about to close the door.

I spoke to him at once. 'I have come here,' I said, 'merely on account of a wish your wife once expressed to me, and of which perhaps you are ignorant. I have heard that she is to be buried in Gortfern churchyard; and I think it my duty to tell you that it was her earnest desire to be laid after death beside her mother.'

'I have made my arrangements,' he replied, 'and it is too late to change them now.'

'But remember it is the last opportunity you or I shall have of doing anything she wished. It's not too late. I can speak to the sexton as I return. Now, Stockdale,' I continued; 'you know the injury you have done me. Well, I'll forgive

it, here and now, if you will have this one thing done that my cousin wished.'

But no; he would not. The more I urged my request, the more determined he seemed to become in refusing; so I left him. Madman that he was, there came a time when he would have given all that he possessed to have done what I so earnestly entreated him to do that evening! But already the hand of Fate—I should give it another name—was resting on him!

Gortfern churchyard was, as I have said, about five miles from Rathminster. The road, a bad one, little used, led up among the hills, and came out upon the level moorland above, and was now principally employed for carting the peat into the town. It was out on this moorland, near a little lake, and surrounded by rushy fields and heather, that Gortfern churchyard was situated. Whether there had ever been a church there, I know not; and now it was only the few families living in the neighbourhood that ever used the place as a burying-ground. There poor Fairy's grave was made, deep down in the black peat; and there, as the cold winter wind moaned and sighed around us, the funeral service was read, and then we left the churchyard. But few persons accompanied us the whole way to Gortfern; and of these, Stockdale and I alone had remained to see the grave filled up. I was a little way in advance of him as we walked down the lane leading to the road; there was no one near us, and as I had something to say to him, I turned round and stopped him.

'What's this for? What are you going to do?' he stammered, and thrust his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat.

'You need not be frightened,' I replied; 'and you may leave that pistol where it is. I am not going to hurt you. It may even be a relief to you to hear what I am about to say.'

'I don't wish,' he answered, 'to hear anything from you.'

'But you shall!' I said, placing myself directly before him, so that he could not pass without pushing me aside. 'You know,' I continued, 'the wrong you have done me, and what you deserve at my hands. Well, it is impossible to alter what is past; and I have come to see that to punish you for it would bring me no satisfaction. With regard to her, I hold you answerable for her death.' He was going to speak; but I went on: 'Yes; it was your cruelty that brought her to it. I told you once that your safety lay in her love for you. Well, that is at an end now, and my hand is free to strike. But she is gone—gone where she needs no more the love or the protection I could give her—where no hand can assail, and no hand is needed to defend. I do not say I forgive you; your great sin is not against me, and it is not mine to pardon it. But mark me well! Do not flatter yourself, because you have escaped human vengeance' [as I spoke, the man became ashy pale]; 'you know best what you have done, and what you deserve; and I tell you that now, as I stand before you, the conviction is strong upon me, that for the wrong you have done my cousin, the punishment will yet overtake you, and that I shall live to see it!' As I turned to go, he exclaimed: 'Stop! Stay a moment. What do you mean? You had better take care how you invent'— He hesitated.

'You need not fear me, Stockdale,' I said. 'I shall leave this place to-day. I wish never to return to it or to see you again. If I should, it will not be my doing, but the work of a Hand from which no human creature can escape!'

WHAT IS A COLD?

BY A MEDICAL MAN.

To enjoy life, one must be in good health; and to remain free from disease is the desire of all. Yet there are some ailments which do not interfere very much with the pleasures of life, and therefore are not dreaded in consequence—nay more, they are frequently treated with neglect, although in many instances they are the precursors of more serious disorders which may in not a few cases have a fatal termination. How often to the usual greetings which one friend exchanges with another is the reply given: 'Very well, thank you, except a little cold!' A little cold; and yet how significant this may be. In how many cases do we find a 'little cold' resemble a little seed which may sooner or later develop into a mighty tree. A little cold neglected may and frequently does prove itself to be a thing not to be trifled with. Let me then pray my readers to remember that small beginnings in not a few instances have big endings, and this especially where disease exists. Let us then consider what is a common cold.

In the first place, we must be paradoxical, and affirm that it is not a cold at all. It is rather a heat, if I might so express myself—that is, it is a form of fever, but of course of a very mild type, when it is uncomplicated by other diseases. It is certainly in the majority of instances due to the effects of cold playing upon some portion of the body, and reacting upon the mucous membrane through the intervention of the nervous apparatus. What is called a cold, then, is in reality a fever; and though in the majority of instances it is of such a trivial nature as to necessitate few precautions being taken during its attack, yet in some cases it runs a most acute course, and may be followed by great prostration. Even when the premonitory symptoms of a cold are developing themselves—when, for example, what a medical man calls a rigor, or as it is popularly designated, a shivering is felt, when we would naturally suppose that the animal temperature is below par, it is at that very moment higher than the normal; thus showing the onset of fever.

Before going at once into the symptoms and nature of the disease under discussion, it will be advisable to dip a little into that most interesting department of medical science—physiology, and indeed, without doing so, it would be quite impossible for the majority of my readers to understand the manner in which cold acts in producing the inflammatory condition of the mucous membrane of the nose, or as it is called, the Schneiderian membrane—which inflamed condition constitutes a cold in the head. It will be necessary to understand what a mucous membrane is, what its duties are, and how these duties are performed, before entering upon a description of a disease attacking it. To take the mucous membrane of the nose as

an example. We find that it is a membrane spread out over a very large area, lining as it does a great many undulations caused by the arrangement of the bones composing the walls of the nostrils, so that a very much greater surface is required to be traversed by the air entering the lungs through the nose—the natural passage—than is required by the actual length of the canal. The object of this is obvious, when we take into account the fact that the temperature of the air is usually either below or above that of the human body, and that it is almost invariably loaded with particles of matter which would irritate the lungs did they find access to them.

The tortuous passage of the nose thus tends in the first place to equalise in some measure the temperature of the atmosphere inhaled, with that of the lungs; and in the second place, the mucus which is secreted by the Schneiderian membrane being of a tenacious nature, tends to attract and ensnare the impurities which the air may contain. We thus see that the nostrils act as a filter to the air taken in by inhalation. If we observe any mucous surface we cannot help remarking its deep-red colour, this being due to the close network of blood-vessels ramifying on its surface. In consequence of this accumulation of minute arteries and veins through which warm blood is constantly flowing, a pretty high temperature is constantly maintained in any cavity lined by mucous membrane. There is therefore little difficulty in understanding how important a part the nostrils play in preparing the air for its entrance into the sensitive structure of the lungs. But the nostrils do not only temper the air—they also yield to it an amount of moisture which renders it still more bland and less irritating. We see, then, that the functions of the nostrils as regards the atmosphere inhaled are threefold—(1) in equalising its temperature, (2) in moistening, and (3) in filtering it. The latter function is materially aided by quite a forest of minute hairs which guard the entrance to the passages.

Having noticed how distended the blood-vessels of the mucous membrane naturally are, it will not be difficult to understand how slight a disturbance of the balance of blood-supply will be necessary to produce congestion or inflammation of the structure, and such is really the case; and it is because of this that people who have what is called an irritable mucous membrane are so susceptible of cold. They have, in fact, a chronically congested mucous membrane, which, however, is usually associated with and dependent upon a disordered digestion. Yet notwithstanding these facts, a cold is not produced by cold air acting upon the surface which suffers. It is quite true that there are individuals with peculiar idiosyncrasies who take catarrh when they smell certain substances. For instance, many cannot go into a room where powdered ipecac is exposed without immediately catching catarrh in the nasal passages; and there is reported the case of a man who could not smell a rose without being affected in a similar way.

We must now go a step further before we can understand the *modus operandi* by which a cold in the head, or in any other region, is produced. It has been shown that one of the functions of a mucous membrane is to secrete mucus. But what is it

that makes the secretion vary in quantity? Well, an irritant applied directly to the surface may produce an excessive flow, and this superabundance of mucus is thrown out by an effort of Nature in its endeavour to shield the delicate membrane and remove the irritant; this may happen also when there is an excessive amount of blood in the vessels, which is the case when congestion exists, the distension of the blood-vessels acting as an irritant, and supplying in greater amount the fluid from which the mucus is extracted, thus tending to excite the secreting power to greater effort. Thus we have an explanation of the excessive discharge in catarrh of the nose. But when the direct irritant is removed, the unnaturally abundant discharge ceases. Not so, however, when the superabundance is due to the effects of cold; for in the latter case a diseased condition is set up, which will only disappear when the effects of the exposure upon the nervous system have passed away.

Having demonstrated that cold is not produced by the action of cold air playing upon the part affected, but that, on the contrary, it is an effect of cold acting upon a distant part of the body, it will be necessary to explain how this is brought about. If a person sits in a draught of cold air, and this draught is directed upon the back of his head, the chances are that a catarrh of the nasal passages will result, and this is produced by what is called reflex action of the nerves. Here it will be necessary to diverge a little and explain what reflex action is. It must be understood, then, that there are numerous nervous centres connected with the spinal cord. These nervous centres send filaments of their nerves to various portions of the body. For example, a nerve centre may be placed alongside the spine in the neck, and from this point nerves may be distributed to the back of the head and the mucous membrane of the nose. One important function of these little bodies is to control the supply of blood to different surfaces and tissues and organs. This is done by a system of minute nerves which are distributed on the arteries, by which the vessels are kept in a state of contraction. Now, if these nerves are severed from the main trunk, the blood-vessels immediately expand to the full extent of their calibre, and congestion is the result; or if these nerves are paralysed, the same effect is produced. Sometimes a very slight shock produces a temporary paralysis of these minute nerves when a rush of blood takes place into the arteries, of which blushing is a good example; but the nerves soon recover their control over the blood-supply, and the blush passes away. Then again, the shock may produce quite the opposite effect; this may be so severe as to cause such extreme contraction of the blood-vessels, that a deadly pallor pervades the face, as for instance in severe shock from fear. This, however, is caused more by the effect of shock acting upon the nerve centres which supply the heart with motor power.

But let us suppose that one extremity of a nerve arising from a particular nerve centre, is irritated; this is communicated to that centre, which is affected thereby, it may be slightly or more severely. The irritation may be so great as to prostrate for the time being the nerve centre, and in consequence all the nerves arising from it are thrown into a state of inaction. This is called the

reflex action of that nerve centre, because the effects of the irritant applied to one part of the body are thereby reflected to other parts. Instances of reflex action may be seen frequently in every-day life. Take, for example, the action of the eyelid when an object threatens to enter the eye. The retina perceives the object advancing; this is telegraphed to the nervous centre supplying the muscles which open and shut the eyelids, and immediately a message is sent back to the eyelids to shut and exclude the particle of matter that threatens to enter the eye. All this is done so quickly, that it is hardly possible to realise that there is time for reflex nervous action being brought into play.

Another instance of reflex action, but this time influencing the secretions, may be cited. Who is not familiar with the effect of a savory smell or the sight of some luxury upon the salivary secretion, so that, to use a common expression, 'the mouth waters.' In the first, the olfactory nerve is the means by which the impression is conveyed to the nerve centre; in the other, it is the optic nerve which is the transmitting agent; but in each case the impression is reflected to that nerve controlling the salivary secretion, with the effect of producing an increased flow of saliva. We thus see that the secretions can be influenced by one nerve conveying its impression to another whose filaments take origin in a common centre.

Now, to come to the subject more directly under consideration in this paper, we must comprehend how cold acting on one part of the body produces catarrh of the nasal mucous membrane. Exposure to the most intense cold for a lengthened period will not produce this effect. Indeed, we find it invariably the case that severe frost in winter is, so far as catarrh is concerned, the healthiest weather we can have. During the prevalence of frost, as a rule, colds are at a minimum. The system here shows its power of accommodating itself to the circumstances surrounding it, and actually benefits by the prevailing low temperature. Let us, however, suppose a person to be sitting in a room the temperature of which is, say, seventy degrees Fahrenheit, and that a current of cold air is rushing in at an open door or window and playing upon the back of his head, or it may be on his legs or feet, and the probability is that he will 'catch cold,' and in nine cases out of ten this cold will be a catarrh in the head, and what may appear more remarkable still, only one nostril will at first be affected. Now, if the catarrh was due to the inhalation of cold air, both nostrils would suffer; but it is not so, for as each side of the body is supplied by its distinct set of nerves, so only that side is affected through which the reflex disturbance has been transmitted. The *modus operandi* is the following: The draught of cold air acting, we will suppose, on the back of the head, conveys through the sympathetic nerve, which ramifies on the scalp, a shock to the nervous centre from which these nerve fibres proceed; but we must understand that this nerve centre sends its filaments to other portions of the body, and so the shock which this centre receives by one set of nerves, is reflected by another set to some surface quite remote from that primarily acted upon; and in this way a temporary paralysis of the nerves supplying the blood-vessels of the mucous membrane of the nose is brought about. In consequence these vessels become dilated and engorged,

and the shock which has brought about this congestion continuing, disturbs the equilibrium of the blood-supply, and so an inflammatory condition is set up. When this exists, the blood-vessels are enormously distended; consequently an excess of blood passes through the part, the little cells which secrete the mucus being thus excited and working much more rapidly than when in health. In this way the enormous discharge of mucus which accompanies a cold in the head, is accounted for.

Another effect of this irritation of the mucous membrane is sneezing, which is an effort of Nature to restore the equilibrium of the nervous centre by another kind of reflex action. Sneezing in catarrh is a method Nature adopts to stimulate the prostrate nervous centre, and thus enable it to reassert its proper control over the blood-supply to the part; indeed, it will be found that the effects of being exposed to a draught of cold air are often completely destroyed by a succession of sneezes. Of course Nature does not always immediately succeed in these efforts; but when she does not, the shock from which the nervous centre suffers gradually passes away, and the blood-vessels again come under the control of the little nerves which regulate their calibre, and so the catarrh disappears in a few hours, or at most in a few days. It sometimes happens that the shock from the cold air acting upon the nervous centre is of such severity, that the consequent inflammation is intense enough to check the secretion of mucus altogether, and in consequence the mucous membrane is dry as well as inflamed, and the suffering very much intensified.

So far, we have only glanced at a cold in the head which passes away in a few hours, but this is not always the happy termination. There is a peculiar tendency which inflammation possesses of not leaving off where it commenced, but of invading the tissues in its immediate neighbourhood, and more especially when the tissue is continuous with that primarily attacked, as is the case with the mucous membrane of the air passages. A cold may commence in the head and rapidly spread by what is technically termed continuity of tissue into the chest; and so what at the first promised to be only cold in the head may terminate in an attack of bronchitis, or even inflammation of the lungs.

THE SUBSIDENCE OF LAND IN THE SALT DISTRICTS OF CHESHIRE.

UNDER this title, in our issue for April 26, 1879, we endeavoured to give an account of the peculiar sinkings of land in the great Cheshire salt district, and also the causes of these sinkings. Underneath the towns of Northwich and Winsford, and for a long distance around each, there are immense beds of rock-salt, varying from seventy-five to one hundred and twenty feet in thickness. In the manufacture of salt, therefore, these two towns have some natural advantages, derived from their situation. The rocks in Cheshire have a peculiar formation, dipping on all sides inwards to a common centre, which gathers into it what may be called the underground drainage of the whole area. That is, the water that falls on the

surface of the earth for many miles around, sinks down and percolates through the substrata till it reaches the centre. The beds of rock-salt lie in this centre, and the fresh water as soon as it reaches them commences to dissolve the salt, and soon forms a fully 'saturated' brine. This brine exists over nearly the whole of the district under which the beds of rock-salt lie, and above these beds the towns of Northwich and Winsford are built. Here the salt manufacturers sink shafts to enable them to reach this underground collection of brine, and when they have done so it is pumped up to the surface and evaporised—one hundred gallons of brine yielding twenty-seven gallons of salt. Others of them sink mines, and quarry out the rock-salt itself, thousands of tons being in this manner brought to the surface every year, and exported for manufacture into salt. In the mines, pillars are left to support the roof; but in the process of brine-pumping, the surface of the rock-salt is eaten away by the fresh water, and the superincumbent strata follow the wasting face of the rock-salt. In this way the surface of the country is rendered irregular and broken, and the residents are constantly put to the necessity of removing tottering and sinking houses. Many of the hollows which are in this manner formed upon the surface of the ground, are of great extent; and as they soon fill with water, they cover the face of the country as with a series of lakelets. Some of these are many acres in area, and from thirty to forty feet in depth. This subsidence of the soil is a serious cause of danger and anxiety to the residents at all times; and more especially has it been so within these few years past, when the enormous quantity of brine withdrawn from the ground for the manufacture of salt has greatly accelerated these sinkings and depressions.

One of the most extraordinary of the subsidencies that have yet happened, took place at Northwich on Monday, 6th December 1880. About six o'clock on the morning of that day, a rumbling noise was heard in a district on the outskirts of Northwich known by the name of Dunkirk, which is completely honeycombed with abandoned rock-salt mines. Immediately the ground seemed to be heaving as if from an earthquake, and the lakelets in the neighbourhood, varying from half an acre to nearly two acres in area, and thirty or forty feet in depth, commenced to boil and bubble all over, the water being forced up violently some feet above the surface. The whole area of these lakelets was in a furious state of commotion, and the noise of the bubbling water could be heard three hundred yards off. All round, for a space of two thousand feet in diameter, at every weak spot in the ground, air and foul gas were being expelled; and where in its course the gas met with water, it forced it up in jets, usually accompanied with mud and sand. For a space of at least one-fourth of the circumference of the largest lakelet, called Ashton's Old Rock Pit Hole, which covers nearly two acres, there were

at intervals regular mud geysers, spouting intermittently to height of about twelve feet. In one space of about thirty yards in extent, there were at least twenty of these playing at one time. The more violent ebullitions subsided after three or four hours; though in two cases the bubbling and gurgling mud craters continued in action for two days; and the ebullition in the various pits continued on a smaller scale for three days. The whole of this bubbling and boiling was evidently caused by the air that filled the old mines being violently driven out by the inrush of the descending water and earth.

The cause of this great disturbance could not at first be discovered, although, by those acquainted with the district, it was at once believed that it had originated either in a fall of earth or an inrush of water into the mines below. It soon, however, became apparent that a large rift had opened directly across the course of the Wincham Brook. This is by no means a small brook, being from fifteen to twenty feet in width. The rift occurred at a spot where the brook passed through a shallow lake of small size, caused by the subsidence of the land, about one thousand feet from where it enters the large piece of water called the Top of the Brook. This piece of water is about one hundred acres in extent and of great depth, being in one spot more than one hundred and fifty feet deep. Connected with this lake is the river Weaver, which between Barrow's Lock and Saltersford Lock has an area of at least sixty acres. We mention these particulars, as having an important bearing on our narrative.

From six o'clock till nearly nine, there was a steady downpour of water into the rift; but beyond a gentle flow on the surface, not much was perceptible. At nine o'clock, another more extensive rift occurred, and pulled in a portion of the ground belonging to the salt-works of Messrs Ashton and Sons. A quantity of timber and an engine and boiler were in close proximity, also a large iron salt-pan some twenty-six feet long by twenty-four wide. For the next few hours, there was a scene of great excitement, all the men being busily engaged in removing the materials, &c. This they succeeded in doing, but not one moment too soon, as a portion of the land sank directly afterwards. All eyes were now turned to a fine massive chimney-stalk about ninety feet high and nine feet square at the base. This was seen to be perceptibly leaning towards the sinking spot. Up to twelve o'clock, the sinking proceeded gradually, there being a perceptible return current from the large lake, the lower portion of the brook having evidently changed its course, and begun to run backwards. From twelve o'clock to three, the velocity of the backward flow increased; the huge cavity now formed swallowing up the waters of the Wincham Brook itself, and draining a neighbouring lakelet three-quarters of an acre in area and at least ten feet in depth, besides receiving a rapid stream, ever increasing in velocity, from the Weaver and Top of the Brook. From three o'clock to four the scene was grand, but terrible; the velocity of the backward flow of water tore away the bottom of the brook from the edge of the huge crater-like cavity for some three hundred feet in length to a depth of ten feet, the brook being previously only about two feet deep. At this time, the banks on both sides were

torn down and carried with headlong velocity into the vortex of the crater. Notwithstanding this huge inflowing current, the surface of the eddying waters at the centre of subsidence fell at least twelve feet.

About four o'clock, a sudden explosion in the neighbouring pool, and a geyser of mud and water thrown up to a height of from twenty to thirty feet, told of another subsidence. The effect of this upon the hundreds of spectators was very alarming, and there was a sudden rush from the immediate neighbourhood. Fortunately, instead of increasing the mischief, this subsidence seemed to choke the original cavity, and the waters gradually flowed in more slowly, till at six o'clock the face of the pool, of more than two hundred feet in diameter, was perfectly calm, and to the onlooker there was no sign of the terrible strife of the previous portion of the day. Shortly before five o'clock, the tall chimney, which had rapidly become more out of the perpendicular, fell with a terrible crash to the ground.

Scarcely had the original subsidence ceased, when an enormous sinking of the whole of Ashton's Old Rock Pit Hole and the surrounding land for an area of over five hundred feet in diameter, took place, leaving two very deep holes. The land was riven and cracked all round, and fell in steps of two feet. Over ten thousand tons of water went down into the subterranean cavities. A huge brine cistern was riven in two, and the brine all lost; and two large brick kilns cut completely in halves, and the bricks scattered about. The whole surface of the Weaver and the Top of the Brook was lowered fully a foot over one hundred and sixty acres in about four hours; and if to this we add the whole of the water of the Wincham Brook for twelve hours, we shall find, on a careful computation, that not less than six hundred thousand tons of water rushed below.

The question may be asked: 'Where did it all go to?' In immediate proximity to the first rift that occurred, was a rock-salt mine called Platt's Hill Pit. This was being worked by Messrs Thompson and Son; and twice during the past twenty years, in working along the Dunkirk side, they had pricked into the old abandoned mines full of brine that abound in that locality. Although these fractured places had been barricaded off, yet they were not perfectly tight. For some time past, the brine in the Dunkirk excavations had been very low, so that when—probably owing to the eating away of the roof of the mine by fresh water—the brook found its way down the rift into the old mine, it forced the weakest of the barriers, and rushed into the Platt's Hill Mine. The fresh water widening the hole formed in the dividing wall of rock-salt, every minute caused a greater rush of water downwards; and when we mention that the mine covers an area of fifteen acres, not worked, like a coal-mine, in drifts and passages, but in huge chambers from fifteen to twenty feet in height, supported here and there by enormous pillars, varying from twenty-four to thirty feet square, it will at once be seen that the cavity to be filled was enormous. The whole of this cavity being one hundred yards below the ground, the rush of the descending water into it was fearful.

Fortunately, no lives were lost. The men on reaching the pit shortly after six o'clock, perceived

a violent draught of air up both shafts, making a whistling, hissing noise. The foreman, Thomas Moore, and his nephew, both daring and experienced men, especially the former, went down the pit, and found water nearly up to the knees. They had proceeded with lighted candles in the direction whence they heard the noise of the surging water, till they were about three hundred yards from the shaft, when Moore fell, and extinguished his candle. By the light of the remaining candle, however, they waded through the rapidly rising water, and reached the shaft in safety, the water by this time being almost breast-high. Moore has performed more daring deeds in the salt-mines and brine-shafts than perhaps any man living, and like many more mining heroes, he is modest, and rarely mentions what he has done.

Many hundreds of tons of rock-salt that had been 'got,' as well as the tramways, wagons, tubs, tools, and all materials, were totally lost, and the mine, as a mine, permanently destroyed. The fresh water in this mine will eat away ninety thousand tons of the pillars and walls of the pit before it becomes 'saturated' brine; and the great fear is that it may so weaken the pillars as to cause the surface to collapse. This is a constant danger, and one that causes much uneasiness in the districts likely to be affected thereby. The sudden collapse of the ground in the neighbourhood of Ashton's Old Rock Pit fractured the pipes conveying the brine to five sets of salt-works, as well as destroyed the road leading to the brine pumping stations. Thus, there were a large number of men thrown out of employment for a time.

On the Friday, four days after the first sinking, a large hole some forty or fifty feet deep fell in, carrying away the whole of Dunkirk road for a length of fifty feet; and at intervals during the week, minor subsidences occurred, showing that the whole neighbourhood is in a precarious position. Numerous rents and fissures occur on all sides, and indicate a state of great instability.

Though the damage caused by the subsidence is due to a variety of causes, the greatest sufferers are Messrs Ashton and Sons, salt manufacturers; and here it may be stated that perfectly innocent persons, who are in no way connected with the pumping of brine or the manufacture of salt, suffer very serious loss of property and enormous damage; but owing to the difficulty of saying which individual pumper of brine causes any particular damage, they can get no compensation. So serious has this evil become, that an attempt is about to be made in parliament to obtain a Compensation Bill. The justice of the case is perfectly clear. Within the past month, a church and a chapel have been condemned as unsafe, owing to subsidence, and the damage increases in the direct ratio of the progress of the trade.

It may be interesting to know that the crater-like hole formed by the subsidence above described is fully two hundred feet in diameter; and though now choked with earth and filled up with water, showed a depth, two days afterwards, varying from nine to twenty-four feet at the sides to seventy-eight feet in the centre, sloping rapidly down in a funnel-like form. Some forty thousand tons of earth must have disappeared in this cavity. These phenomena of the salt districts of Cheshire

are worthy of more attention than they have received hitherto, as by them the face of nature is being rapidly changed—a change brought about by the industrial operations of man.

MICHAEL O'SHAUGHNESSY'S FUNERAL.

THERE is not much mock-solemnity about the poor Irishman's funeral. The hearse, mourning-coaches, and other usual paraphernalia give place to a train of open carts, on the foremost of which is laid the coffin; the length of the whole procession varying with the popularity of the deceased. But there is no want of feeling in the simplicity; and such a procession usually possesses a natural solemnity of its own, as it slowly passes, for miles perhaps, by mountain and moor until it reaches its destination, in some lonely but too often neglected burial-ground.

But if the generality of funerals among the poor Irish are not remarkable for an appearance of mock-misery, that of Michael O'Shaughnessy the cattle-dealer had none of any kind. It went to the other extreme; it was a very chapter of accidents—a very joke at death, though not altogether an unsuitable way for so merry a fellow to go to his grave. Mike was dead, waked, and lay in his coffin on a cart at his cabin door, whence his funeral was about to start. The widow O'Shaughnessy was very sad; for Mike, for five-and-twenty years, had been a good husband to her; but most of her groaning and wailing had been exhausted at the wake; and it was with a respectable subdued grief, a sense of proud proprietorship and conscious dignity, that she took her seat in the cart on the top of Mike's coffin. Every face she saw round her, she knew; every eye looked sympathy; and the widow's frame of mind was more complacent than it had been since Mike's death. It was a fine winter morning; and the procession, which was nearly a quarter of a mile long, started early, as there were five miles to be passed at a walking pace between the village and the burial-ground. The cart bearing the body of Mike was drawn by his own horse Shoneen, and driven by Daveen, the youngest, but only son then left at home; and Daveen could not suppress a smile of triumph at the dignity of his post.

The procession started, and passed safely and steadily out of the village; and steadily and solemnly it continued for something like a mile; but it was the calm that comes before a storm. A gentleman of the neighbourhood, one of the race of improvers, had established on his farm a steam-plough, a contrivance hitherto unknown in that part of the world; and it so happened with him that he was making a first trial of it on this particular morning. It was therefore hardly to be wondered at that, when our mourners came to the field in which the engine was at work, Shoneen should show his disapproval of such a foreign institution by shying at it. Daveen did his best to 'soother' his astonished and indignant steed; but his efforts were in vain; Shoneen took fright, broke into an uneasy trot, and from that into a runaway gallop. Daveen stood up on the coffin, to get more command over him, and pulled with all his might; but it was of no use. The widow screamed, but kept to her post, clinging on to the sides of the cart. Shoneen was

tearing along like the wind. The whole train of carts behind followed—a quarter of a mile of them—at the top of their speed, in chase of the runaway. The hunt continued, growing keener and more exciting every minute. Those behind were striving who should come up first. The whip was laid on unsparingly. They shouted, gesticulated, and encouraged each other and the horses. Ragged urchins, beggars brandishing sticks, boys on donkeys, every one they came up with joined in the pursuit, and all enjoyed it.

'The hounds are out to-day,' cried one; 'but 'twill be a good fox that'll give them such a run as Mike O'Shaughnessy's giving us this day.'

'Faith, 'tis more like a dhrag-hunt,' cried another.

'Hurry on, boys,' from a third; 'let's be in at the death.'

'Arrah,' from another, 'tis Micky himself would have liked to have been out of his coffin this day—'would just plase him.'

And so on, as field and common and hill were left behind in turn; Daveen doing his best, as he could not pull in, to guide his horse, as he dashed over the rough roads, over steep bridges, and through the brooks that ran across their path, a hundred times narrowly escaping an upset. The widow in terror would fling her arms about wildly, which those behind took for signals of encouragement, and redoubled their efforts to come up with them. The joking continued all the while. 'I often heard tell of a runaway weddin',' said one; 'but bedad, who ever heard tell of a runaway funeral before!'

It did not last much longer, though, for the cavalcade came up with a drove of pigs, which it could not pass, and then Shoneen suddenly halted, nearly jerking the widow and her deceased lord into their midst. With the recovery of her breath, the widow turned to Daveen. 'Ah, Daveen'—very reproachfully—'was that any way at all to be dhriving your poor misfortunate dada to the grave? Shame, Daveen! If it had been an excise-man now, or a Protestant itself—but your own dada!'

'Not a step farther,' replied Daveen, much crestfallen, 'will I dhrive Shoneen this day. The devil himself is in him—so he is.'

They were waiting in the road for the stragglers, some having been left behind in the chase; and even the presence of the widow could not now check the fun among the people.

'Well done, Daveen!' said one; 'you dhriv your dada in great style. 'Tis this very way he'd choose to go to glory himself; he always had a great mind for a hunt.'

'Tis the way,' said another. 'Shoneen knew 'twas the last time he'd be carrying the ould master; he was just showing how willing he was to the work.'

'He knew we were late,' said a third; 'and he wouldn't be kaping his Riverance's dinner waiting.'

'O Micky, Micky!' cried the widow, apostrophising her deceased lord, 'you were an onaisy creature in your life, and you can't go to the grave—God bless you!—like a daent Christian.—Here, James Barry, come and dhrive Mike to the grave; I won't thrust Daveen again with the reins.'

Again they fell into order, and got under-way, travelling slowly, to make up for the dignity

lost by their late speed. But the fates were against the widow; and Mike was not to be buried without yet another mishap. They were about a mile and a half now from their destination, passing along a lane with high banks on each side, as quiet as they had previously been boisterous; but the merriment, though subdued, was ready to break out again on the least provocation. The widow had resumed her seat on the coffin, and James Barry, a middle-aged man, had taken Daveen's post. As they slowly and peacefully passed down the long lane, a shrewder woman than Mrs O'Shaughnessy would not have pictured any near misadventure; but it so happened that the foxhounds were out that day, and that a certain Major, a dark and fierce-looking man, was riding a black horse, and riding hard, at a little distance from the rest of the 'field.' The land on one side of the lane along which the funeral was passing was above the level of the lane, there being a high bank on the side next the lane, and only a moderate fence towards the field. Over this land came the Major, riding hard; and coming to its end, saw what he thought an easy fence, little dreaming that, between, was a lower level—a road—a funeral. Over he went—over, and alighted on the top of the first cart, sending the widow and the coffin flying into the ditch. Oh, the confusion of that moment! The widow in the ditch had flung her arms round the coffin, and shrieked in terror. 'Marciful saints!' she cried, 'tis the devil himself come for Micky!' and the sudden appearance of the stranger on a black horse certainly looked suspicious. 'But I won't lave you, Mike O'Shaughnessy; I'll sthand by you to the last!'

The widow was not the only frightened one—an awful whisper went from end to end of the procession that his Satanic majesty had appeared on a black horse, and was to take part in the ceremony! But in another minute, seeing the unfortunate Major trying to pick up himself and his horse, their momentary fright was gone, and gave place to shouts of laughter. The widow, all the while hugging the coffin in the ditch, kept glancing in terror at the Major, who, covered with mud from head to foot, began to look human.

'Tisn't the devil at all, Biddy,' cried one; 'tis only an army Capt'n.'

'Faith, and that's a'most the same,' exclaimed another.

Biddy started up; her fear and grief were lost in indignation. 'Arrah, bad scran to you!' she cried, shaking her fist at the Major, 'you thase o' the world—you ould black-garred! Oughtn't you be ashamed of yourself, to be destroying a poor widdy woman going peaceably with her husband to be buried! What harrum did Mike ever do you, that you should dhrive his corp and his widdy into a dyke? May yourself fare worse, when 'tis your own turn to be buried! Oh, wirra, wirra! you've destroyed us both!'

'My good woman,' said the Major, choking with laughter, 'I hadn't the least idea that—'

'You hadn't the laste idee! I know well you did it for the purpose. 'Tis a purty thing for a fine gentleman like you to be coming over from England to play off your jokes on the widdy and the fatherless, leppin unknownst on top o' them, and skatterin' a daent funeral into a ditch.'

'Be aisy, Biddy,' said a bystander. 'TwASN'T

done for the purpose at all. I know his Honour well, and often see him go to the barracks. He's a good gentleman, and I'll go bail he's as vexed as yourself about it.'

'Maybe,' said another, with a grin, 'his Honour will stand the price of a new coffin.'

'What would be the good of a new coffin?' said the Major. 'You couldn't take him out of the old one and put him into it.'

'I didn't say to stand a new coffin, your Honour, but the price of one.'

The Major took the hint, and gave the widow a sovereign, which restored peace.

'Long life to you, sorr! and may it be many a day before your Honour's coffin has to thrave, and may it never lie graceful in the bottom of a ditch!' said one.

'And may the fox lade in the opposite direction from your road to the cimith'ry,' cried another.

And so on until the coffin was safely replaced in the cart, the mud scraped off, and the widow reseated on it; and with many a blessing on the Major, the procession set off again. There was no further accident. Mike was buried at last; and a merrier day, his friends said, they had never spent. Requiescat!

THE PUZZLE OF THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS.

A CURIOUS mechanical enigma known as the 15 *Puzzle*, imported from the other side of the Atlantic, is found to be a veritable poser to many persons in our own country. But it is not really a greater puzzle to others of us than the *Chiltern Hundreds*, which again and again spring up into note in connection with contested seats in the House of Commons. A multitude of questions on the subject present themselves. What are these Hundreds, and how many in number? Where are they situated? Why have they a Steward, and has he any duties to fulfil? Is he paid, whether for duties or no? Why do members of parliament so frequently ask for and obtain the Stewardship? Let no one be ashamed of ignorance on these points; he has plenty of intelligent and generally well-informed men to bear him company and keep him in countenance.

Just a few words concerning locality. The Chiltern Hills extend in a diagonal line across many counties, including Berks, Bucks, Herts, and Bedford, and present different characteristics in different parts. That portion which traverses the county of Buckingham was in old times nearly covered with forests of beech-trees, grand and magnificent, but infested with robbers who had nothing of the romance of Robin Hood and Maid Marian in them. The Crown, as a means of protection to the neighbouring inhabitants, appointed a Steward or Bailiff for the three Chiltern Hundreds of Stoke, Desborough, and Bodenham or Bokenham. He had a business office, duties to perform, and a salary for performing them. A sweeping change has long ago taken place; forest, robbers, place of business, duties, salary, all have vanished. But—and this is the singular part of it—the nominal office is still kept up; because it lends itself to a very peculiar stratagem or manoeuvre adopted to

extricate members of the House of Commons from an occasional dilemma. If the Stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds happens not to be vacant at a time when some one member wants it, that of the manors of East Hendred, Northshead, and Help-holme will answer the same purpose.

A very remarkable usage of parliament is the main cause to which all this is due. Sir Erskine May, Chief Clerk of the House of Commons, and the leading living authority on all matters relating to the laws, rules, orders, and proceedings of that branch of the legislature, tells us that a member after due election *cannot resign his seat*; whatever else he may do, he cannot do this. If he ceases to hold his membership, it is because in effect it is taken away from him, willingly or unwillingly on his part. Hence arise certain manoeuvres which are in reality shams. If he wish for any reason to resign his seat in the House of Commons, he asks for and obtains a post or office under the Crown, that of Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds. Now there is a law in force which enacts that for any office created or founded since the beginning of the last century, if a member accepts it, he thereby at once forfeits his seat and the House knows him not. If he holds no such office, but nevertheless wishes to resign his seat, he applies for the Stewardship. The Prime Minister for the time being represents the Crown on this occasion. As a matter *pro forma* he nearly always assents; and the recipient may and often does surrender the honour on the very next day, when it has answered his purpose. The office, as we have said, is merely nominal—no place of business or of meeting, no responsibilities, no duties, no salary or fees.

It might perhaps be supposed that the absence of emolument would place this office outside the general rule; but the warrant of appointment, it appears, grants the Stewardship 'together with all wages, fees, allowances, &c.' This is the hard nut to crack; seeing that it retains the form of a place of profit whether with the substance or not.

Once now and then the Crown, through the chief responsible minister, refuses to make the grant. Just about a hundred years ago, one Mr Bayly wished to become member for Abingdon instead of member for another borough which he really represented in the House of Commons. He applied for the Chiltern Hundreds as the only available means of resigning one seat and presenting himself as a candidate for election by another constituency. Lord North, the Prime Minister at that time, refused him, saying: 'I have made it my constant rule to resist every appointment of this kind where any gentleman entitled to my friendship would be prejudiced by my compliance'—a politely veiled but unmistakable example of party favouritism; for Lord North wished to secure Abingdon for some reliable supporter of the government. Such matters were regarded with more leniency in the days when 'Farmer George' was king than they would be now. This Mr Bayly was aware of the rule that a member for one constituency cannot exchange for another except by vacating his seat through the medium of the Chiltern Hundreds. An eminent judge lately on the bench, when a member of parliament thirty years ago, availed himself of the Stewardship to obtain a seat which he desired instead of the one he really held.

Without direct mention of the names of members of the legislature at the present time, we may state, in regard to current and recent events, that the Prime Minister lately gave an explanation of the puzzle of the Chiltern Hundreds which left many persons still unenlightened. He stated in the House of Commons, in reply to a question put to him, that the President or Chairman of one of the government departments had accepted the coveted Stewardship, in despite of his holding office. In a further attempt to throw light on a misty subject, the Prime Minister said : 'I did not advise the Crown with reference to the grant of the office of Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds, but at once made a grant of the office on a printed form. The office was to be held during her Majesty's pleasure, and was on that account, I suppose, held to be an office under the Crown.' The words we have italicised, especially 'I suppose,' show that even our greatest statesman is not quite certain on the matter. The official whose case came prominently forward had been unseated in a particular borough, on account of some irregularities committed by his agents without his sanction or cognisance. A new writ was issued, and a second election placed him at the head of the poll. Learning, however, that doubts had been expressed touching the legality of his actual position, and wishing to avoid all complications and demurs, he applied for and obtained the famous Chiltern Hundreds. Not strictly so in fact ; for the grant was to the Stewardship of the manor of Northstead ; but the effect was just the same in answering the intended purpose. He offered himself to and was accepted by the constituency of another borough, for which he now sits, retaining his office in the government.

One thing is satisfactory in this otherwise curious meddle-muddle. The Prime Minister by no means prizes the right of grant vested in him. He stated : 'It must not be supposed that I am in any way enamoured of the power placed in my hands. It is one of the curious anomalies of our system that the only ordinary method by which a member of parliament can vacate his seat should be left within the discretion of the Prime Minister of the day. I am decidedly of opinion that some better method of proceeding in such matters might be devised.'

The beginning of the end is visible. When an authority such as the Prime Minister expresses so unequivocal an opinion, it is not rash to predict that we shall ere long see the end of the

PUZZLE OF THE CHILTERN HUNDREDS.

ANCESTRAL PORTRAITS.

I AM pleased you see the traces
In these sweet 'Sir Joshua' faces,
Of my features, and my eyes ;
Fair they are, that girl and brother,
With their young and smiling mother,
Beautiful beyond disguise.

For observe their dress how simple,
Muslin with embroidered wimple,
Yet I think the effect is good ;
Scant perchance, yet freely flowing ;
Nothing to impede the growing
Into graceful womanhood.

And their houses were not cumbered
With the rarities unnumbered,
Wherewith now we deck our rooms ;
Wainscot walls, and plainly tinted ;
Nothing vivid, save where glinted
Sunshine on a bowl of blooms.

And their gardens differed greatly
From all those we have seen lately,
Where the flowers in strange device
Grow as in a broidered cushion,
Holding all that art can push in,
Without leave to spread or rise.

Their flowers grew in natural order,
In the wide old-fashioned border,
Bright with pink and peony ;
With tall hollyhocks in posies,
Stocks, and lavender, and roses,
Purple larkspur, and sweet pea.

And I liked their yew-cut alleys,
Framing vistas of the valleys,
And the church-tower, and the lea,
And the stately trees whose shadow
Fell at eve o'er park and meadow,
Century after century.

Their amusements—well, for certain,
If on them I lift the curtain,
You'll pronounce them tame and few ;
And a yellow page you're turning—
You would scrutinise their learning ;
Ah, it would seem small to you

Who have sat for hours in classes,
Making notes of all that passes ;
But you see their sphere was home ;
There they reigned supreme and thrifty,
And the matron long past fifty,
Kept her dignity and bloom.

And they had their Christmas dances,
Summer junkettings and fancies,
And the daintiest, cheeriest teas ;
Sometimes too a little scandal ;
But a strain from Boyce or Handel
Cleared the air like summer breeze.

And although they might work blindly,
Yet their aims were good and kindly ;
In their quiet neighbourhood
Not a child but knew and loved them,
Old and middle-aged approved them,
And took pattern as they could.

So they lived, my ancestresses,
Simple, unperplexed by guesses
At God's secrets veiled for aye :
Books were fewer, knowledge rarer ;
But none nobler, sweeter, fairer,
Grace the England of to-day.

M. L.